

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1-10. (Canceled)

11. (New) A connecting element for a mechanical and electrically conductive connection, comprising:

an operating element having first and second plates which are directed toward one another such that two conically tapering faces are arranged on respective opposite sides of the first and second plates, thereby forming two conically tapering openings with cone openings directed opposite to one another; and

first and second wedges respectively inserted in the two cone openings, wherein the first and second wedges can be displaced with respect to each other such that faces of the wedges drive the conical tapering faces of the first and second plates away from one another.

12. (New) The connecting element of claim 11, wherein the first and second wedges are displaced with respect to each other by a screw.

13. (New) The connecting element of claim 11, further comprising:

a supporting wall arranged in a central region of the connecting element;

a truncated cone supported against the supporting wall; and

a tensioning loop passing through the truncated cone and the supporting wall, wherein when the first and second wedges are displaced with respect to each other driving the conical tapering faces of the first and second plates away from one another, the tensioning loop is tensioned.

14. (New) A connecting element for a mechanical and electrically conductive connection, comprising:

an electrical conductor, which has a cutout in its outer contour in which at least one spreading element of the connecting element can be inserted;

an operating element having first and second plates which are directed toward one another such that two conically tapering faces are arranged on respective opposite sides of the first and

second plates, thereby forming two conically tapering openings with cone openings directed opposite to one another;

first and second wedges respectively inserted in the two cone openings, wherein the first and second wedges can be displaced with respect to each other such that faces of the wedges drive the conical tapering faces of the first and second plates away from one another;

a supporting wall arranged in a central region of the connecting element;

a truncated cone supported against the supporting wall; and

a tensioning loop passing through the truncated cone and the supporting wall, wherein when the first and second wedges are displaced with respect to each other driving the conical tapering faces of the first and second plates away from one another, the tensioning loop is tensioned and the truncated cone is drawn into a conical opening in the at least one spreading element.

15. (New) The connecting element of claim 11, wherein the connecting element has at least one first and at least one second spreading element, which each have an associated first and second electrical conductor

16. (New) The connecting element of claim 14, wherein the electrical conductor is an inner conductor of a compressed gas-insulated tubular conductor.